THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No. Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

South-Asian train service

3353. SHRI JABIR HUSAIN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railway Ministry of Pakistan has technically approved an Indian proposal to launch South-Asian train service linking Bangladesh, India and Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether Pakistan Government has conveyed their approval for further evaluation;

(c) if so, whether all the Governments have given their approval;

(d) if so, whether her Ministry's proposal of Dhaka- Delhi- Lahore train is viable in all respects;

(e) whether services could be extended to Karachi or Islamabad if need arises; and

(f) if so, by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (f) At the third meeting of SAARC Inter-Governmental Group on Transport held on 24th July 2009 at Colombo, India circulated a Concept Paper on running of a demonstration container train from Bangladesh to Pakistan *via* India and Nepal. The possible corridor for running the demonstration train mentioned in the Paper was Chittagong Port/Dhaka (Bangladesh)-Katihar (India)- Birgunj (Nepal) - Lahore (Pakistan). The meeting noted the proposal and the Member States were to consider this proposal and offer their comments within three months.

This position was approved in the second meeting of SAARC Transport Ministers held on the next day *i.e.* 25th July 2009. All the Member States, including Pakistan and Bangladesh have agreed to evaluate the Concept Paper circulated by India. However, comments from the Member States have not been received. Any further decision on the proposal including extension to other points can be taken only after the Concept Paper is first discussed and agreed among the member countries.

Plan for mobilization of financial resources

3354. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to put in use the surplus railway land to raise additional financial resources;

(b) if so, whether there is any policy firmed up to that end;

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, without a policy how can her Ministry goes for such utilization;

(d) whether Railway Board consulted the concerned State Governments in that respect;

(e) whether State Governments came up with their requirements;

(f) whether Railways is factoring in the developmental needs of the concerned State Governments while doing so; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (g) Yes, Sir. The Railways Act, 1989 was amended with a view to set in place a mechanism to undertake commercial development of that vacant railway land and air-space which is not required by Railways for its immediate future operational needs. Consequently, Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) was set up through the Railway (Amendment) Act, 2005. 133 sites measuring 3744 acre have been entrusted to RLDA on various Zonal Railways for commercial development.

In addition, Railways plan to utilize its vacant land, wherever feasible, for setting up of various infrastructural projects, which include Rail Coach and Component factories, Multi-Modal Logistic Parks, Auto hubs, Cold Storage & Perishable Cargo Centres, and others through innovative financing models in order to earn more revenue for the railways, create additional railway infrastructure and also generate employment opportunities. Consultation with State Governments is done wherever required.

Survey of new rail line from Jogighopa to Guwahati

3355. SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of survey of new railway line between Jogighopa and Guwahati *via* Barpeta, Hajoia and Sualohir;

(b) whether survey of the above new line would be completed in the current financial year; and

(c) if so, the amount fixed for the said survey?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No survey has been sanctioned for construction of a new railway line between Jogighopa and Guwahati *via* Barpeta, Hajoia, Sualohir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Filling up of vacant group 'C' and 'D' posts

†3356. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that group 'C' and 'D' posts are lying vacant due to retirement of employees of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway;

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.